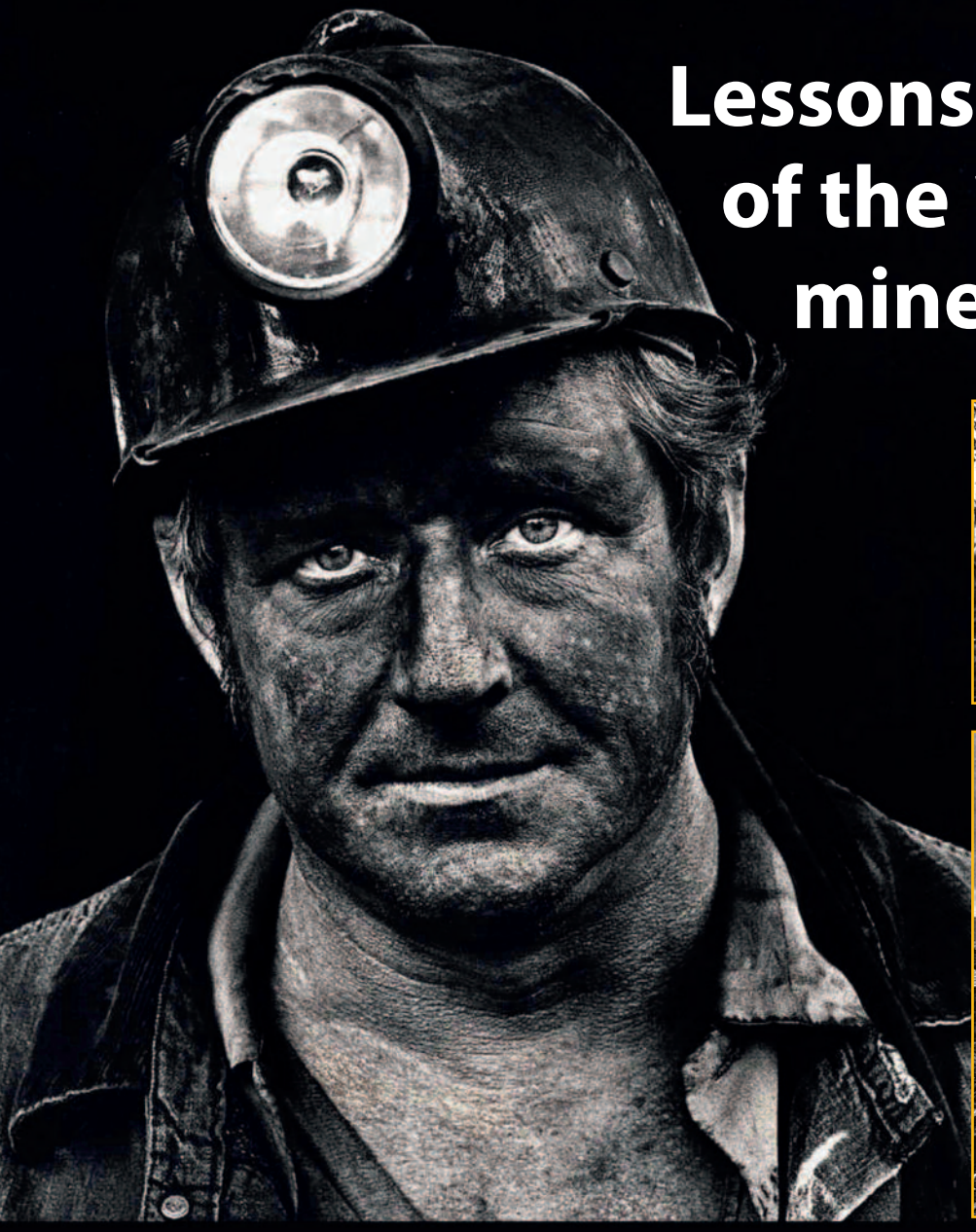
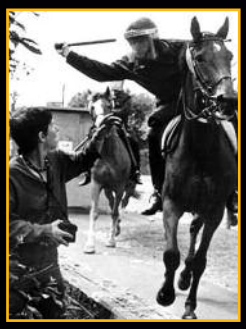
ASLEF

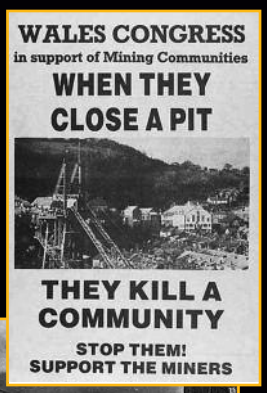
PUBLISHED BY THE ASSOCIATED SOCIETY OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND FIREMEN

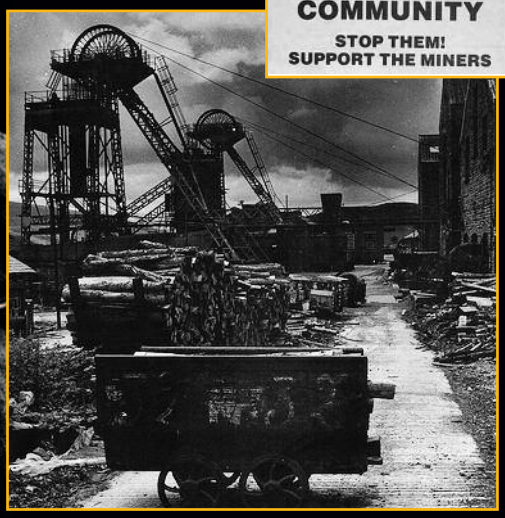
JOURNAL
FEBRUARY 2014



Lessons for today of the 1984-85 miners' strike







PETER TATCHELL: My challenge to Dave, Nick and Ed

DAVID DOUGLASS: I've been a miner for a heart of gold

MICK WHELAN: Fare's fair for rail passengers

10 RMS at Low Hall, Scalby

15 To test or not to test

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Recommendations were well Hidden

THE government has announced its shortlist of preferred bidders for the East Coast franchise so, despite communities and councils up and down the east coast, unions, politicians, and the travelling public, all campaigning for this successful DOR to remain in public hands, this government, as with every other consultation, ignores the people's wishes. The three preferred bidders now have one year to prepare their rushed bids and we have a year to try and change this decision.

Last month I wondered where we are with the 93 Hidden recommendations 25 years after the Clapham rail disaster. Number 46 leaps out: 'The court welcomes BR's commitment to introduce Automatic Train Protection on a large percentage of its network, but is concerned at the timetable proposed. After the specific type of ATP has been selected, ATP shall be fully implemented within five years, with a high priority given to densely trafficked lines.' Although there were successful ATP systems available, developed in other countries, that could have been bought off the shelf, this did not happen. The Western got a newly developed ATP that was not rolled out, the make do system of TPWS is not comparable and the 30 year timetable for ETRMS means we are no nearer.

Number 18, on excessive levels of overtime, is flawed because it was based on what BR considered to be 'operationally achievable' and in my view needs reviewing.

The recommendation on overcrowding was agreed by the Secretary of State and transport user consultative committees. 'For the type of stock involved in the accident there should be no standing (except by choice) and the load factor should not exceed 110%.' The latest figures for overcrowding show that all the top ten breached BR's 110%. The most overcrowded service was the 07.44 First Great Western train from Henley-on-Thames to Paddington at 184%.

Finally, I want to offer my sincere congratulations to Alan Donnelly on becoming EC president and Colin Smith on his re-election to DO3.

Mick Whelan, General Secretary

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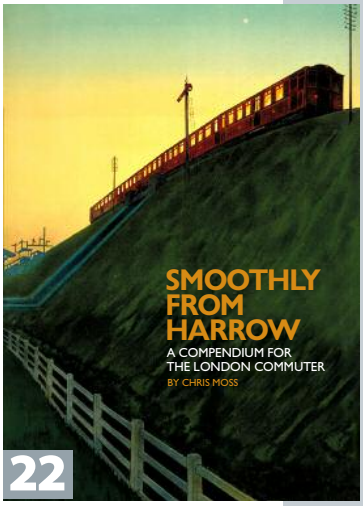

ABOUT ASLEF

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More than just a union

Look East for Labour

MARK REYNOLDS of Lincoln branch reports from the East of England Labour Party conference in Luton

ASLEF has made great efforts – and great strides – in the last couple of years to re-engage with the political process. To put the union not just at the heart of discussions about the future of the railway industry, but at the heart of the political debate, too, about the economic and industrial direction of Britain.

As part of this ongoing process, an ASLEF delegation, led by District 5 Organiser Nigel Gibson, and which included Les Bennett, Mark Daniels, Wendy Hurst, and me, attended the East of England Labour Party conference at Luton in December. The conference, we noted, contained fewer statistics and more policy making as we move closer to the general election in May 2015.

Ed Miliband addressed delegates after dinner on Friday, highlighting his disgust at the government's creation of an NHS crisis with massive cutbacks in staff and waiting lists getting longer as well as back door privatisation. Labour, he said, will repeal the coalition's health and social care reforms. He also promised to increase child care in schools to help people back into work. He said it was a stain on the record of David Cameron and Nick Clegg that 1 million young people

Labour leader Ed Miliband name checked Wendy Hurst, and ASLEF, in his speech

are still out of work and he also sent out a clear message of wishing to work with, not against, the trade unions.

On Saturday and Sunday we heard speeches from Deputy Leader Harriet Harman; Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls; Shadow Foreign Office Minister Kerry McCarthy; Kelvin Hopkins, MP for Luton North; Gavin Shuker, MP for Luton South; Richard Howitt, MEP for the East of England; and Lisa Forbes, PPC for Peterborough; and debated the National Policy Forum report.

ASLEF has, increasingly, become a big player in the East of England party. Les Bennett and Wendy Hurst were both re-elected to the regional board and Les chaired a session of conference on Sunday morning.

Nigel Gibson, Mark Daniels, Les Bennett and Kelvin Hopkins held a fringe meeting on Saturday, attended by 50 of the 200 delegates at conference, to discuss the future of the railways in Britain – private train operators, shareholders' interest, the blame culture for train delays, fare increases – and how 70% of passengers now believe the railway should be back in public ownership!

The Labour Party, although maybe not quite how we would like it, is the nearest political party to our beliefs, and in the eastern region ASLEF is now playing a big and positive part.

25 years on

Mick Whelan, Simon Weller, Alan Donnelly, Tosh McDonald, Dave Calfe, Marz Colombini, Howard and Becky Kaye, Graham Morris and representatives from every branch on South West Trains joined mourners at a ceremony, including a two minute silence, on the 25th anniversary of the Clapham rail crash. They paid their respects to the 35 men and women who lost their lives – another 500 people were injured – when three trains collided just after 8am on 12 December 1988 at Clapham, south London.

A public inquiry into the disaster, conducted by Anthony Hidden QC, found that the primary cause of the crash was a wiring error made by a worker who had only had one day off in the 13 weeks prior to the accident.

The Hidden report made 93 recommendations – including limits on the hours railwaymen should work – to improve safety on the rail network in Britain.

The memorial garden is close to the site of the triple train crash

Classic art is top of pops in poll

This vintage poster, of stylish commuters in top hats and posh frocks, has been voted by Londoners their all-time favourite Underground poster. The picture, by the poster artist Horace Taylor, which first appeared on sites in the capital in 1924, topped a poll of 40,000 people organised by the London Transport Museum.

On the wrong track

A Labour council has urged the government to abandon plans to re-privatise the East Coast main line. Durham County Council is calling on the coalition to keep the line in 'public hands as a public sector comparator for other franchised rail networks and as a significant contributor to the public purse.'

Bob Glass, who tabled the motion, said: 'The government isn't just on the wrong track on this one – it's heading full steam towards disaster. Since returning to public ownership the East Coast has paid more than £600 million into the Treasury's coffers – which will be £1 billion by the end of this Parliament – so privatisation would be a new Great Train Robbery.'

Alan Donnelly re-elected

Alan Donnelly, executive committee member for District 3, was re-elected president of ASLEF by the EC at their first meeting of the New Year on 13 January.

Mick Whelan at King's Cross with RMT leader Bob Crow (left)

Fare's fair says Mick

Rail passengers in Britain are spending three times more of their salary on travel than commuters in other European countries. Fares, which went up last month by between 3.1% and 5.1%, are rising more than four times faster than average wages.

A study by the campaign group Action for Rail reveals how people using Britain's privatised rail services are now paying through the nose compared with commuters using publicly-owned railways in France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

A worker in the UK on an average salary now spends 14% of their monthly wages on a £299 monthly season ticket from St Albans to St Pancras. In mainland Europe workers making similar journeys spend around 4% of their salary on fares in Germany and France, 3% in Spain and just 1% in Italy. Campaigners blame privatisation for saddling hard pressed British commuters with the highest fares in Europe, despite a £3 billion public subsidy.

Research by another campaign group, Transport for Quality of Life, shows that more than £1 billion a year is being wasted by a combination of debt write offs, dividend payments to private investors, administrative and legal costs.

TQL says fares could be cut by 18% if this waste – 'the costs of privatisation' – were eliminated by bringing services back into a nationally-integrated railway under public ownership.

Mick Whelan said: 'Passengers are fed up with the poor value they are being offered by Britain's privatised train companies and they want the government to do something about it.

'We warned a year ago that more and more people are falling into transport poverty and these new figures underline that point. It cannot be right that passengers are being forced – and they are being forced because they have no meaningful choice – to pay through the nose just to get to where they work.

'These new fare rises are only going to exacerbate the problem and drive even more people into transport poverty.'

Frances O'Grady, general secretary of the TUC, said: 'Rail passengers and taxpayers are being poorly served by a privatised rail service that has failed to deliver any of the efficiency, investment and cost savings the cheerleaders of privatisation promised.'

Rail deaths fall in Scotland

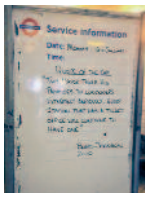
Accidental deaths on the railway in Scotland are at their lowest level for a decade and the number of people taking their own lives on the tracks has also fallen after peaking in 2012. Figures for 2013, provided by the Rail Safety and Standards Board, show that 19 people committed suicide on railway lines in Scotland last year, down from 27 the previous year. The number of accidental deaths, by people trespassing or falling on the line, was two.

500 CLUB: P Manley, with number 138, won the January draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £360.

Off the rails

KARL DAVIS, a driver with DB Schenker, and ASLEF activist, wrote a piece for the *Huffington Post*, the online newspaper founded by Arianna Huffington, née Stassinopoulos, about the Cheddington Van Raid on the 18.50 mail train from Glasgow to Euston in 1963. Karl reminded readers that Ronnie Biggs, a career criminal, was one of a 15-strong gang which beat driver Jack Mills unconscious with an iron bar. Mills and second man David Whitby are far more deserving of our attention, said Karl, than Biggs – whose son now wants to scatter most of his ashes at Bridego bridge in Buckinghamshire, where they robbed the train, but promises to 'keep a few grains' to tattoo into his skin 'in memory of dad'.

DAVID MORRISSEY and Sheridan Smith were praised for their performances in the two hour television drama *7.39* about a couple of commuters who fall in love on the train to Waterloo. Critics called it 'a love story for grown ups' and the rail scenes, on board the train, and at the station, got it right. Except for one thing. Information screens announcing 'all trains cancelled' followed newspaper headlines about an 'RMT strike' and struck the only false note. A strike by ASLEF drivers would mean no trains, a strike by the RMT would not.



QUOTE OF THE DAY by quick, witty, and disgruntled station staff facing the sack because of the perfidy of TfL boss Peter Hendy, raised wry smiles from commuters at Clapham South station last month by pointing up another broken pledge by London Mayor Boris Johnson. 'This mayor takes his promises to Londoners extremely seriously. Every station that has a ticket office will continue to have one – Boris Johnson 2010.' Boris, who shoots from the lip, is haemhorraging support from people who have to travel to work in the capital each day.

ED MILIBAND has overruled Ed Balls on high speed rail. Sir David Higgins, the new chairman of HS2, insisted on the *Today* programme on Radio 4 that the project now has the backing of both main political parties in Parliament. At the Labour Party conference last September, the Shadow Chancellor appeared to have gone cold on the project. Asked if everyone was now singing from the song sheet, Sir David replied: 'I think so, yes. We've certainly got a good line of communication with both sides of the government and the opposition.'

GARY GOLDSMITH, uncle of the Duchess of Cambridge, known (before she married Prince William) as Kate Middleton, has told hard-pressed passengers to stop 'bleating' about fare rises. 'Funny that people bleat on about a 3% rise in rail ticket pricing,' he says, 'to get the benefit of getting more house for their pounds in the suburbs.'

Take it out on the punch bag

Rail staff in China being abused by passengers over a shortage of seats have been given a giant punch bag to help relieve stress. Call centre workers in Beijing handle up to 30,000 complaints a day from commuters but risk being fired if they are not polite.

Station design fails the legacy test

Richard Rogers (right) admires Paddington, built by Brunel at the high water mark of Victorian engineering, and Charles Holden's Southgate station, built between the world wars

RICHARD ROGERS, the leading British architect, probably best known for designing the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the inside out Lloyd's building in the City of London, and the new Terminal 5 building at Heathrow, has warned that the £15 billion Crossrail project is set to produce badly designed stations which will not live up to Britain's great railway heritage.

Construction work on the line, which will run 73 miles from Maidenhead in Berkshire to Shenfield in Essex, via the heart of the capital, should be finished by 2018.

Crossrail says its eight new stations in central London – by architects such as Norman Foster – will feature 'world class design' to build on a rail industry legacy stretching back to Isambard Kingdom Brunel's Victorian masterpieces, such as Paddington station, and Charles Holden's designs for Tube stations in the 1920s and '30s.

But Rogers has slammed the decision by those managing the project not to apply similar standards to 27 stations to be redeveloped outside the city centre.

'These stations should be treated in the same way as the early Tube stations,' he told *Building*. 'These are important public buildings which millions will travel through. There has to be somebody who knows something about design looking at this. This is serious, because it could scar a community that uses a station for a century or so. Of all the things that have influenced me, the greatest are the great Victorian railway stations.'

Councils along the route are also calling for the designs to be examined independently, because Crossrail and its partner, Network Rail, say they are determined to focus on 'value engineering' which is their preferred euphemism for cost cutting.

Mark Lucas, head of planning and regeneration at the London Borough of Redbridge, which will have four Crossrail stations, said: 'There is still time, but the door is closing. The last time stations on this branch were created was 1839, when the Victorians built them. When you're talking about something which should last a century and a half, we should have the greatest possible design scrutiny. The Ilford station upgrade will cost £6 million, a fraction of what the central London stations cost, and has already been the subject of an internal value engineering exercise.'

A Crossrail spokesman said: 'We believe these improvements can be satisfactorily designed and delivered by working directly with local authorities.'

An honour and pleasure – Stan

Stan Moran, who steps down as a district organiser in May, says it has been an honour to represent the train drivers of District 7. He said: 'I would like to say a huge thank you to the GS, the EC, and all the staff at head office for their support over the years. I have gone through some bad times as an EC member and full time officer but, when the going got tough, I never resigned or walked away. Then, being deselected from the EC, I took it on the chin and did not complain but carried on supporting the membership of this great trade union. Colleagues, it has been an honour and a pleasure to represent you all and give leadership in times of crisis and come out of the bad times smelling of roses.

'I would also like to thank the company councils I have worked with over the years, especially in Wales and the Chilterns, for their help and support, not to forget the new First Great Western company council.

'I can only say what a great GS we have leading us, and a very committed EC. All the best to ASLEF and its membership and remember, united we stand, divided we fall.'

Stan the man

SAFE AND RELIABLE RAILWAY

Public members of Network Rail have produced their first annual report outlining how they have held the board to account in the past year. The group, defined as the board's secondary governance, has a role similar to that of shareholders in companies except that they have no financial interest in the business. The group has assisted in improving 'the systematic under reporting of safety incidents involving both workers and contractors'. Peter Skyte, members' co-ordinator, says it's important people know who the group are and what they do. 'The report shows how we are discharging our governance role in Network Rail and delivering a safe, reliable and improving railway for the people of Britain.'

China to help reopen Midlands rail line

The Stonebridge Railway in Warwickshire, which opened in 1839 but closed in 1935, and ran from Whitacre Junction to Hampton-in-Arden, could get a new lease of life. The China Railway Group has confirmed its interest in a scheme, drawn up by Alan Marshall of *Railnews* and Michael Byng, to reopen the seven mile line and restore passenger services from Walsall through Sutton Coldfield to Water Orton. 'It would give people in Walsall a link to HS2 without having to change anywhere,' said Mr Marshall.

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Entente cordiale

KATY PROCTOR, ASLEF's website editor and conference organiser, reports from the CGT Cheminots congress

TOSH McDONALD, ASLEF's vice-president, attended the 42nd congress of the Confédération Générale du Travail Cheminots (the French railway workers' federation) in November. Delegates from transport unions in Belgium, Italy, Spain, Hungary, Morocco and Vietnam also attended, as well as representatives of the ITF and ETF from Germany, Norway and Luxembourg.

In his opening speech Gilbert Garrell, general secretary of the CGT Cheminots, reminded delegates that workers around the world have been badly affected by the financial crisis. Billions of pounds of public money have been spent bailing out the banks, but working people have borne the brunt of austerity measures – with reductions in salaries and pensions, higher unemployment, and a deterioration in terms and conditions, as well as later retirement ages, higher taxes, savage cuts in public services, brutal increases in the cost of living – while the bankers who caused the crisis have got away scot free.

He condemned the repression of trade unionists in Greece, Turkey, Palestine, Cambodia and Bangladesh and called on unions to stand together in the defence of workers' freedom of expression and the right to unionise. The effectiveness of trade unions, he said, depends on their strength.

Christian Joncret, federal secretary of the CGT, reminded delegates that there is much we can learn from each other to help in pushing forward agreements. Much of our rail legislation, he said, now comes from Brussels in the form of European Union directives which continue to push the discredited neoliberal agenda of privatisation and fragmentation of national rail networks. He suggested forming stronger ties between unions because closer collaboration would help in the fight against the Fourth Railway Package and other policies opposed by rail workers in every European country.

This was supported by Tosh who noted that many British train drivers now work for the same bosses as European railway workers. 'The largest employer of ASLEF members is DB Schenker and the largest train operating company in Britain, Northern, is owned by the Dutch state railway.'

Tosh told delegates that privatisation in Britain had resulted in fragmentation, into franchises, and money haemorrhaging from the system in the form of profits for the firms and dividends for their shareholders. He contrasted the success of the publicly owned, and publicly accountable, East Coast main line with the failure of the privately-run West Coast line. Since 2009 East Coast has paid back £800 million to the Treasury, and reinvested £40 million, making money for the public sector, while Virgin, running a very similar service between London and Scotland on the other side of the country, has taken more than 13% of their funding from the taxpayer.

Tosh added: 'It is untrue to say we need public spending cuts because of financial deficits. Public services are being cut but our public spending isn't. The difference is that now private train operators make a profit.'

As trade unionists we share the same principles and values, so there is much we can learn from sharing experiences and supporting each other. The congress was a welcome reminder of what can be achieved by closer international collaboration and campaigning.

The French railway workers' congress was held at Poitiers. Delegates also visited the Alstom plant at La Rochelle where TGV Duplex trains are made

Inquests: is end in sight for compelled to attend?

MICK HOLDER reports on a meeting the GS had with the Chief Coroner

Furthering ASLEF's aim for train drivers involved in fatal incidents on the railway not to be compelled to attend inquests to give evidence, general secretary Mick Whelan met the Chief Coroner of England and Wales, Peter Thornton, in December.

Drivers have frequently raised the issue of being compelled to attend inquests into fatalities, usually suicides, in which they are involved while at work. ASLEF reps have spent much time and effort negotiating rehabilitation policies for drivers involved in such incidents and all the help they receive can be undermined by having to give evidence in open court. It runs the risk of reopening old psychological wounds because of the long delays in holding a formal inquest.

The union believes that where there is no question about the driver's role they should not be compelled to attend; instead coroners would consider written evidence from the driver, read aloud by a court official.

Mick said: 'Mr Thornton was surprisingly well briefed before we met and very sympathetic to our concerns. He said it was his aim to hold all inquests within three months of a person's death and he was not averse to our members not attending inquests. He said he could do nothing on the media naming drivers as inquests are statutory public hearings and the press are allowed to attend. The Chief Coroner said he will discuss the issues I raised with his colleagues before responding formally.'

TRUCK TYRE LEFT ON LINE

Police are hunting vandals after a First Great Western train travelling from Paddington to Penzance struck a lorry tyre deliberately placed on the main line between Menheniot and Liskeard in Cornwall.

DC Dave Bailey of British Transport Police said: 'The driver brought the train to a halt and, although the train suffered some damage, he was able to continue after a delay of around 30 minutes. Thankfully, no one was injured, but placing objects on the railway line is extremely dangerous and could result in serious consequences.'

Caught on camera

THE number of motorists caught jumping red lights at level crossings in Scotland has more than doubled in a year. Vans used by British Transport Police caught 293 on camera driving through warning lights between January and November last year, compared with 144 for the whole of 2012. The new figure is four times that for 2010.

Police say they caught more offenders after deploying a second mobile camera van. Both units patrol several crossings each day. The initial van – the first of its type in Britain – was introduced after all three people in a car were killed when it was hit by a train at Halkirk in Caithness in 2009.

Network Rail plans to increase the number of fixed cameras at level crossings, too, so motorists driving dangerously have a much greater chance of being caught. Those convicted face a minimum fine of £100 and three penalty points on their licence.

Crossings where the highest numbers of motorists have been caught include Logans Road in Motherwell, Cornton between Stirling and Bridge of Allan, and Stevenston in Ayrshire.

Superintendent John McBride said: 'Near misses cause delays which disrupt passengers. The vans are trying to protect vehicle drivers and rail passengers, and help people get to work.'

Motoring groups back the crack down, but say replacing crossings with bridges and underpasses is the only long term solution.

'We support the use of cameras at the busiest crossings, and high profile mobile units will reduce risky driving,' said Neil Greig of the Institute of Advanced Motorists. 'It remains to be seen how long the effect lasts after the cameras move on.

'In the long term, the best solution is fewer unmanned crossings and more underpasses or bridges. That will be very expensive and difficult to fund and Network Rail has limited funds.'

London calling

FINN BRENNAN opens his District 8 diary

We are holding our first political training event aimed at giving activists a better understanding of ASLEF's political strategy, and encouraging and assisting members who may be interested in running for elected office themselves, on Tuesday 11 February.

On the same day we are holding a fundraising event for Hope Not Hate at Azzurro on Tooley Street near London Bridge. Guests include GS Mick Whelan, Kevin Maguire, associate editor of the *Daily Mirror*, and Matt Collins, of Hope Not Hate, who addressed AAD in Edinburgh last year.

In March, Debbie Reay, our district representative to, and national chair of, the Women's Representatives Committee, is hosting an event to mark International Women's Day and celebrate the role of women in our union.

In April we mark 25 years since the wildcat strikes on London Underground in 1989. We will be organising a seminar to bring together some of the key players in this important dispute to talk about its relevance to drivers today.

And in the summer our district will once against host the Viner/Turell memorial football trophy.

Crunch time for cross border mega trucks

PHILIPPA EDMUNDS reports on a last minute push for votes ahead of the big debate in Brussels

Please lobby your MEPs again, as they will be voting in February on whether to allow cross border mega trucks in the European Union. The vote is finely balanced with two clearly opposing camps and a few undecided MEPs.

It is crucial we make MEPs aware of the political implications of supporting a policy which will allow enormous 82ft long 60 tonne lorries to come into the UK. Mega trucks will mean more fatalities, more congestion, more pollution, and higher maintenance costs as well as severely undermining our rail freight industry.

It's a hard battle because the European Commission has cleverly implied that the decision will rest with each member state. But while the British government says it will not allow mega trucks here, the reality is that it will come under enormous pressure from the influential road haulage lobby to allow the lorries, on competition grounds, onto our roads.

Britain has already caved in to pressure from the haulage industry by allowing 7ft longer trailers. Now we need to tell our MEPs that enough is enough.

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Korean railway workers win fight for future

The International Transport Workers' Federation has cautiously welcomed a settlement of the bitter dispute in South Korea. Members of the Korean Railway Workers' Union went back to work on 31 December, after 23 days on strike, when an agreement was reached with the National Assembly which gives the union a place on a newly-created committee on the development of the rail industry. Workers fear the government is trying to break the union, and renege on terms and conditions, for privatisation. The KRWU thanked unions in other countries, including ASLEF, for their solidarity.

ITF president Paddy Crumlin said: 'The mass mobilisation of trade unionists and the moral and practical support given shows the privatisation of the railways will not be taken lying down.'

Acting general secretary Steve Cotton added: 'The international labour movement will continue to monitor the situation closely. We urge the government to stop these utterly unacceptable attacks and are on standby to support our Korean brothers and sisters.'

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Passionate debate and funny stories

BILL DALE reports from the Retired Members' Section weekend at Low Hall in Scalby

Old loco men gather round (sitting, from left) Ray Jackson, Bill Ronksley, John Evans, Matty Daley, Alan Donnelly and Tony West to reminisce about the glory days of British Rail (above) and steam (right)

RETIRED train drivers with a total of 1,421 years' service on the footplate turned up at the RMS annual forum at Low Hall in Scalby, North Yorkshire, to swap memories and stories and, as Marcel Proust had it, enjoy the *Remembrance of Things Past*.

The forum is great for debate – it's interesting how many of the issues affecting the rail industry in the old days still resonate today – and it shows that our members continue to be involved in both the union and political matters that can be shared.

Bill Ronksley, who celebrates his 90th birthday in May, is still very active politically, with the trades council, and John Evans, who is 96, is a walking history book with a wealth of knowledge, while Matt Daley, at 93, is still active in local politics and giving advice to those who need help.

RICH GETTING RICHER

For our first session on Friday the EC president Alan Donnelly spoke of how the East Coast main line is, under state control, doing very well and returning a healthy profit to the government. Rest day working continues to cause major concerns, especially the proposed RDW at ScotRail.

He highlighted concerns over terms and conditions at freight operating companies, reduced hours contracts, and those companies set up to train drivers and then employ them on zero hours contracts. There is, he said, a safety case to examine this, but it is our own people passing them out.

On pensions, these are now set at the government retirement age and not, as was, at 65. Pension contributions set at 15% for higher earners can be afforded, but for low earners this was difficult and concerning. He also outlined the issues surrounding free travel pass boxes.

Our second speaker, on Saturday, was Ian Lavery, Labour MP for Wansbeck and former president of the NUM. He said there is a real need for more trade unionists and ordinary working people to become MPs and be a voice for the people in the House of Commons. Currently, he said, there are far too few, but plenty of career politicians.

The 2015 election manifesto should, he said, incorporate re-nationalisation of our assets, particularly the railways, as the East Coast, under state control, has made a profit of £800 million for the Treasury.

High energy prices are being set by a cartel of the Big Six, by them selling and buying from each other, but for the general public it means real financial problems trying to pay. The poor are getting poorer while the rich are getting richer. He finished by highlighting that this country is the seventh richest economy in the world yet we have child poverty at 45% 'which is a disgrace.'

EQUALLY GOOD

On Sunday Lee James, equalities adviser at head office, who also deals with the RMS, gave us a short report. She has been with ASLEF for eight years and spoke about homophobia in the mess room, along with graffiti and abuse. This issue is being addressed and monitored as it is not acceptable.

On freight, the lack of women's toilets is a real issue, and although on TOCs there are better facilities, there continues to be an issue here, too. She said on diversity the lack of recruitment of women drivers needs to be addressed. On TOCs, part time working has increased and a review of equality across the railway is required. She advised that head office staff do not know when a member retires, unless the branch secretary advises them, and it is their job to do so.

POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

Tosh McDonald, vice-president and EC member for District 4, talked about the political ideology of privatisation and nationalisation. Ed Miliband's promise that Labour will freeze energy bills, he said, is popular with the general public. We have 80% of British coal still buried underground, ready to be brought to the surface, and clean coal technology to produce energy without having to import gas and oil is achievable.

The Conservative-led coalition's cuts to public services, and swingeing benefit cuts, are badly effecting the elderly, and public opinion is swaying on the need for more austerity which we know isn't working.

On trade union matters Tosh said the political fund was an essential campaigning tool for ASLEF, to help us get our voices heard, and he hopes there will be a "yes" vote to continue the fund in the ballot later this year. It was interesting, he added, that 50,000 new trade union members had been registered recently; a recognition, he said, of the power of the union.

The forum was a great weekend of passionate political debate, coupled with amusing personal stories over a coffee in the lounge or a beer in the bar. Join us at the next one…

Our Retired Members' Section now has 2,164 members; if you know someone who hasn't yet joined, encourage him or her to contact head office

Legal equality is important – but not enough

Human rights campaigner PETER TATCHELL makes an urgent appeal to the leaders of our three main political parties

OVER the last half a century, Britain has made great strides towards repealing discriminatory laws and providing a wide range of protection for women and minorities. Starting with laws against racial discrimination, we've progressively legislated to secure similar protections on the grounds of gender, disability, religion and belief, age, sexual orientation and gender identity.

This legislative drive culminated in the Equality Act 2010, which replaced the uneven, fragmented patchwork of equal rights laws with a single comprehensive and uniform equality statute, where all of us are equal before the law. A milestone achievement.

JUST THE FIRST STEP

Yet repealing discriminatory laws and giving everyone equal legal protection against discrimination is just the first step. We also have the challenge of ensuring these laws are effectively interpreted and enforced. There's no point having good equality legislation if it's not put into practice: if, for example, employers don't ensure equality in the workplace and police don't crackdown on racist attacks, sexual violence and homophobic hate crime.

What's more, formal legal equality is not enough. We also need to change the way institutions like businesses, local councils, the NHS, schools, the church and media treat people – and win public opinion in favour of accepting equal rights for all. If ignorant and intolerant attitudes linger despite good laws, prejudice, ostracism, hostility and informal discrimination will continue.

GLASS CEILINGS

Too many people seem to think that law reform is the be all and end all; the final obstacle to overcome. They are mistaken. Despite formal legal equality between the sexes for many years, women's earnings are still only four-fifths of men's and glass ceilings still prevent many able women from getting to the top in some professions. Half a century after the end of racially discriminatory statutes in the US, the informal segregation of black and white communities is as great as it was in the 1950s. Many poor black people are just as locked out of economic success as they were prior to the start of the civil rights era. Proof that law reform is insufficient.

As well as changing laws, it is also crucial to change attitudes, values and institutions; to win hearts and minds for equality, inclusion and acceptance. The media and education have a crucial role to play. They must now be a key focus of equal rights activism.

The media is the main means of social communication; a prime source of news, ideas and opinions. It impacts on our consciousness every day. This makes it very influential. It stands to reason that a more inclusive and ethical media can help undermine ill-informed prejudice and promote respect and equality.

This is why it is so important that the post-Leveson press watchdog establishes and enforces an ethical code of conduct, similar to the one that the National Union of Journalists has had for decades. Contrary to what the anti-Leveson scaremongers say, the NUJ's code has never stopped any journalist from investigating and reporting stories. It simply encourages accurate, non-bigoted reporting; including the avoidance of lazy stereotypes and the use of biased language.

We need to make sure that when the new press body gets going it includes ethical guidelines – and that they're enforced.

NO CHILD IS BORN BIGOTED

The other key means to secure the adoption of equal rights values is the school system.

No child is born bigoted. Some become bigoted; from the bad influences of adults and peers. Early and sustained education can help prevent that. To combat intolerance and bullying, education against all prejudice – including racism, sexism, disablism, ageism, homophobia and transphobia – should be a compulsory subject in every school. Equality and diversity lessons should start from the first year of primary level onwards, with no opt-outs for independent or church schools and no right of parents to withdraw their children.

These lessons in equality and diversity should promote understanding and acceptance of Britain's many different communities; and the idea that the right to be different is a fundamental human right. The lessons should be subject to annual examination, with the results going on each pupil's record. They should have to be declared when applying for higher education and jobs. It is in the interests of employers and employees to have a workplace without prejudice. Bigotry is divisive and saps morale.

Making equality and diversity lessons a compulsory part of the national curriculum and a specific, stand alone examination subject, would ensure that pupils and teachers take these lessons seriously. Otherwise they won't.

These, then, are two ideas for carrying forward the equality agenda now that formal, legal equality is won. Over to you Dave, and Nick, and Ed....

For more information about Peter Tatchell's human rights work visit www.PeterTatchellFoundation.org

Peter Tatchell, who addressed our District 1 district council, has a message for David Cameron, Nick Clegg (above) and Ed Miliband (right)

I WANT TO LIVE, I WANT TO GIVE, I'VE BEEN A MINER FOR A HEART OF GOLD

DAVID DOUGLASS, a coal miner for 40 years, NUM branch official for 25, and now a critically-acclaimed historian of Britain's battered coal mining communities, reflects on the bitter miners' strike which began 30 years ago

THIRTY years ago, here in Britain, we reached a crossroads. There were two clear ways to go – two economies, two concepts of society, two different versions of value and worth.

From where we stand now, in a country wracked by energy crisis, fuel poverty, mass unemployment, a manufacturing sector on the brink of extinction, social deprivation, loss of vision and faith, loss of community, solidarity, trade union freedom, with a labour market marked by fear and jackboot management, and the growth of state surveillance and social repression, it is clear that we took the wrong road.

That mass strike of 1984-85, those bitter and hard fought twelve months in which the coal communities of this island, with all the values and traditions they represented, fought a war which led to our virtual extermination within a decade, was a fight for far more than miners' jobs, and associated jobs; and it was a fight for more than our communities. It was a fight to save a quality of life, a meaning for the working class; for the right to fight, the right to intervene in society and to challenge the power of the establishment. To assert a different set of values and meanings.

The Thatcher government tried to starve wives and children (above) into submission to force the strikers, led by Mick McGahey and Arthur Scargill (below), back to work

MYTHS ABOUT THE MINERS' STRIKE

A set of myths has grown up about the miners' strike and it is time to put the record right. Those myths, which will doubtless be repeated by the Tories and their mates in the media this summer, include:

- Arthur Scargill brought the miners out on strike
- He picked the wrong time of year, when we couldn't win
- He denied us a national ballot
- He organised flying pickets to intimidate miners to strike
- The aim was to save worked out mines and uneconomic pits
- The strike was futile

Arthur Scargill was president of the National Union of Mineworkers. He was not in the Yorkshire coalfield when the strike, prompted by the closure of Cortonwood colliery, began. Yorkshire miners voted at mass meetings throughout the coalfields to strike, a decision endorsed at a mass delegate meeting, almost unanimously. Arthur was at none of those meetings and wasn't present when the vote was taken.

We work in an extractive industry – we extract coal – and we know seams become exhausted. We have never fought for mines to stay open which have no coal in them, or are too unsafe or too difficult to work. We have always accepted that, and agreed that formally with the NCB early on in the dispute. The British coal industry was the most modern and efficient in the world, producing coal in the safest mines at the cheapest production costs on this planet.

We knew the attack was coming – that Margaret Thatcher and Ian MacGregor were determined to force a confrontation by closing productive, economic pits – and imposed an overtime ban in 1983 until September 1984. By then coal reserves at pit heads and power stations would be exhausted. A short strike then would close the country.

The Central Electricity Generating Board went to Thatcher and warned her that if the overtime ban stayed in place a strike would be successful. They needed to kick start the strike as early as they could by challenges to which they knew we would be forced to respond. They picked the date, not us; for us it was a choice between fighting, with a chance of winning, or not fighting and going down, defeated, without a whimper.

A DECISION OF THE RANK AND FILE

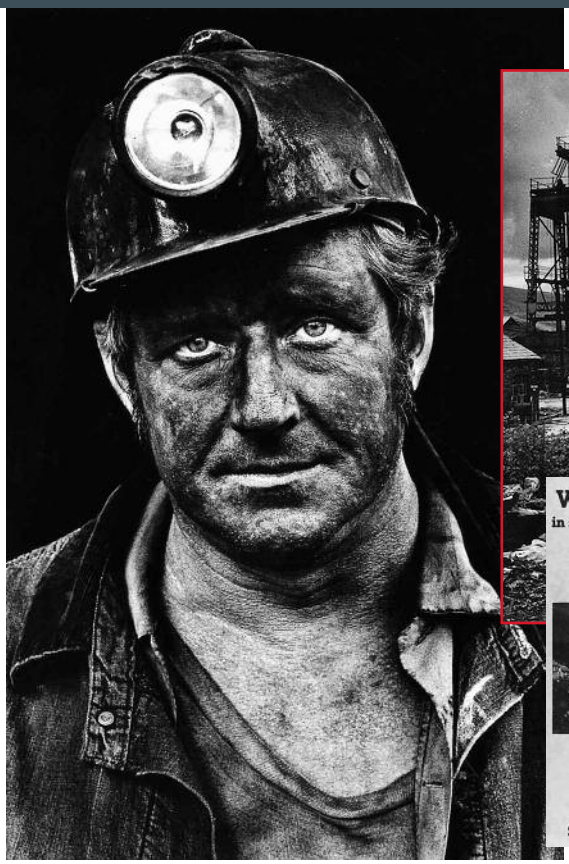
The NUM leadership had called a national rule change conference in anticipation of holding a national ballot. The members, branch by branch, and region by region, voted on that proposition. A special conference voted by a clear majority not to have a ballot because all but half a dozen mines were already out on strike. Arthur was in the chair, so couldn't propose or second any of the resolutions, and he didn't speak, for or against, any resolution, either. It was a decision made, rightly or wrongly, by the rank and file after thoroughgoing debate.

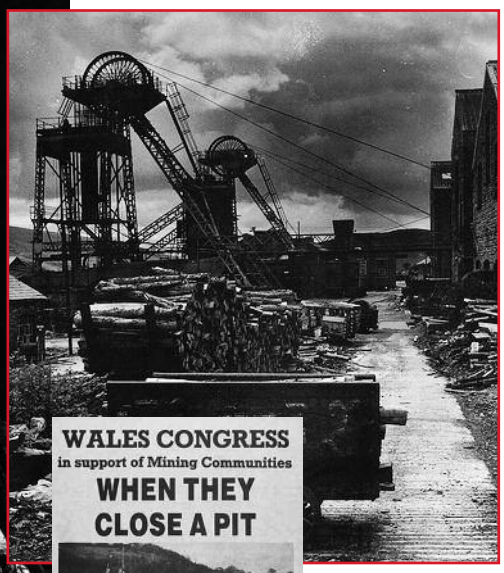
Pickets were deployed for the bulk of the strike by area and local strike committees, not by Arthur.

ASLEF's involvement during the strike was one of total commitment, both in direct solidarity terms, blocking the movement of scab fuels, and in terms of welfare relief and assistance. Every coalfield in Britain had links with ASLEF regions and a huge number of individual branches and pits had direct links with ASLEF branches. Within four weeks of the start of the strike, Hatfield, my own pit, was receiving welcome food parcels and donations to our four food kitchens feeding the extended Hatfield Thorne communities.

Contrary to the myth that the strike was a forlorn exercise the NUM came to the cusp of outright victory on a number of occasions, and on two of those the actions of ASLEF and the NUR were crucial.

The question of Orgreave and the famous bloody battlefield it became is a vexed one, certainly for police brutality, but also, internally, it was Scargill's folly, but brought things to a head. The strike wasn't a national strike, as such, but area strikes linked by national support. Control of picketing and strategy rested with area strike





Next month marks the 30th anniversary of the start of the miners' strike in March 1984

committees which granted, under strict control, exemptions to deliver union authorised coal to schools, pensioners, and families with new born children.

THE BATTLE OF ORGREAVE

At steel and coke works a supply of coke was vital to the survival of the plants, some of the coal industry's biggest customers, due to the delicate nature of the walls of the furnaces and ovens. We granted them enough coke to keep the linings intact. In the case of coke ovens this meant the production of coke, but all of that coke was used only on NUM authorisations and deliveries, by union drivers who had never crossed a picket line. The coke delivered to Orgreave, Llanwern, Ravenscraig and Scunthorpe was carried by ASLEF drivers with NUM officials in the cab, and a big sign in the window saying NUM approved coke. It allowed the steel plants to tick over, but no steel was produced.

Arthur hated these exemptions; he wanted to bring matters to a head, and by May had wrested control of exemptions from areas to his own office and then abolished them. The ISTC didn't know this had happened until they applied for fresh coke and were turned down. This led to the assault on Orgreave, to take the coke out by lorry, without agreement, which lit the fuse on the powder keg. Coke was no good on its own, and the plant required iron ore which was delivered by ASLEF drivers and NUR guards.

I organised the Hatfield main colliery picket of a small railway bridge over the lines, by hanging a bed sheet with the words 'official NUM picket line, ASLEF, NUR do not cross'. The first of 13 daily trains of iron ore into the plant stopped and, after climbing up the bank to the bridge, the driver and guard told us that would be it for the duration of the strike. An engine was brought and the train backed up into a siding where it stood for the duration of the dispute. No trains crossed and this triggered a far reaching reaction. The dockers, true to national instruction from the TGWU, initially refused to off load coke or iron ore from foreign vessels at Immingham onto fleets of scab lorries. But then they broke, and allowed the lorries and fuel to be offloaded by non-dock labour.

THATCHER WAS READY TO CONCEDE

This caused the first of two national dock strikes in support of the Dock Labour Scheme which, within a week, was closing down the country. Ron Todd and Bill Ronksley spoke to a mass meeting of screaming money-mad Immingham dockers, pleading with them to hold the line and close the port, during which Ron was hit by an iron bolt thrown by a scab.

Keith Joseph revealed, twenty years later, that had the strike lasted another week, and had they been unable to buy off the dockers, then Thatcher was ready to concede the whole mining dispute. But we didn't know that, and the T&G had only managed to bring out their members on the promise this wasn't a strike for Arthur Scargill and the NUM but a defence of the Dock Labour Scheme. The government signed in blood that the scheme would stand, and non-dockers would not do dockers' work. So the strike was called off, and the Immingham dockers unloaded the scab fuel onto lorries, while the rail unions stood firm for the remainder of the strike. Three years after the miners were defeated, union power on the docks was broken in a last stand at Liverpool, and the Dock Labour Scheme was smashed.

RELEVANCE OF THE STRIKE TODAY

Some of you might ask why the story of this struggle, thirty years ago, is important, and what its relevance is now. The answer, simply put, is that we are where we are today because the miners and their allies lost a battle we were forced to fight.

Thirty years ago Britain was awash with energy – coal, gas, and North Sea oil – but now we are the midst of an energy crisis which cannot be resolved within the present political straightjacket. There is no energy market in Britain, there is no choice for consumers, and the politics of energy is determined today by reference to the politics of energy then.

The aim of Thatcher – to break the alleged power of the unions, the organised ranks of the industrial proletariat – was achieved by the wholesale destruction of manufacturing in Britain. The shift to international money laundering, property speculation, and ever more bizarre financial instruments which no one really understands, has left us with a casino economy which spectacularly collapsed five years ago. It's a house of cards built on quicksand.

In the twelve months of the miners' heroic stand 9,808 men were arrested; 10,372 were charged; there were three killings (four if we include Keith Frogson who was murdered by a scab twenty years later); four counts of criminal damage with intent to endanger life; three explosives charges; five threats to kill; 200 people imprisoned; 882 were sacked for violence and sabotage; and 967 for striking.

The total cost of the strike, the decimation of communities, loss of earnings and revenue, loss to associated businesses and local economies, the switch to inefficient and more expensive fuels, social security payments, policing, ill health, etc, are ongoing, and rising, and likely to reach £100 billion.

Where we are today, as a country, shows the importance, and significance, of the miners' fight.

Over the page David Douglass reveals the close links between ASLEF drivers and NUM communities during the strike

The Battle of Orgreave, at a coking plant between Rotherham and Sheffield, was a defining moment not only in the dispute, but in post-war industrial relations

From coal miner to railwayman with gratitude and respect

DAVID DOUGLASS examines the close ties between ASLEF and the NUM during the bitter miners' strike which began in March 1984

ASLEF's involvement during the strike was one of total commitment both in direct solidarity terms, blocking the movement of scab fuels, and in welfare relief and assistance. Every coalfield area in Britain had close links with ASLEF regions and a huge number of individual NUM branches and pit communities had direct links with ASLEF branches.

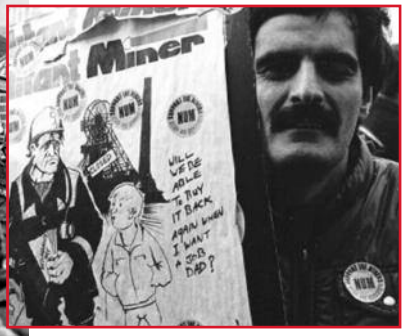
Within four weeks of the start of the strike, Hatfield, my own pit, was receiving welcome food parcels and donations to our four food kitchens feeding the extended Hatfield Thorne communities. Derek Abrahams and Three Bridges branch receive a special mention in our local history, because of their weekly donation of funds and material support and the fact that he was a regular visitor in person to the kitchen and our picket lines.

This was also true of Brighton and Bognor Regis. At the end of November both these branches, working in close association with the NUR, delivered toys for our children for Christmas together with baby clothes, and this was replicated branch by branch across the country. The chairman of Doncaster ASLEF, remembered as Jeff Mathews, was also a regular visitor and contributor to our kitchens. As the elected co-ordinator of the Doncaster pickets, I was in daily contact with ASLEF and NUR in the region and, frequently, nationally. They informed me where we needed pickets, and where pickets were absent, and where drivers had to 'assume' pickets were present when often they were in the bloody pub!

BADGE OF SOLIDARITY

In terms of twinning with NUM branches and producing strike solidarity badges – ASLEF/NUM and ASLEF/NUR/NUM – this union was certainly top of the tree, with no less than 196 different badges. They take up ten pages of the comprehensive foolscap book by Brian Witts which records most of the badges made during and commemorating the miners' strike.

Ray Buckton, general secretary of ASLEF, discussed with me a wild scheme to have 2,000 Doncaster pickets board empty freight trains headed past Ollerton and Harworth, with a view to them teaming from the wagons as the trains slowed past the pits whose roads were sealed off by armies of police. He suggested I was 'quite mad' but said he wouldn't be looking and the driver, he was sure, wouldn't notice 2,000 unofficial hobos in the box cars. I phoned Ray directly every week, from strike HQ in Doncaster, with an update of where we were and what we needed, and he tipped me off as to nationwide developments his members were reporting back to him.



Memories of the miners' strike

The solidarity of the rail unions, both ASLEF and the NUR, was crucial. Our worst supported area was Leicester, where 31 miners struck in a coalfield of 2,500. In his book *The Dirty Thirty: Heroes of the Miners' Strike* (Five Leaves, £7.99) David Bell says: 'The Dirty Thirty speak with gratitude and respect about the value of the help they got from the railwaymen of the Mantle Lane depot, Coalville.' The rail unions at Coalville voted to black the movement of scab Leicestershire coal in their region and this was quickly endorsed at national level in both unions.

UNITED IN THE STAND

Anthony Gregory, a trainee driver and ASLEF member, remembers: 'Coalville depot was soon in the thick of it. As we talked it over with my colleagues, it was soon clear that we were in support of the strike and greatly admired the striking miners and their families.

'In April 1984 the first railwaymen were sent home for refusing or blacking the coal. Some of them would not move a coal train for the rest of the year long dispute. Donations were used to pay train crews for loss of earnings when they were sent home, as British Rail would not pay for refusal to work. When I returned to Coalville depot from my six months' driver training in Derby, I was asked to second man a coal train. I refused and was sent home. This became a regular occurrence.

'Later in the year railwaymen from Coalville were invited to Kersley colliery miners' club in Coventry. We filled a 52 seat bus and were present to see the unveiling of a railwayman shaking hands with a miner. When we were called up onto the stage we were given a standing ovation.'

A joint poster in support of the strike was issued by ASLEF and the NUR shaking hands with the NUM under the slogan United in the Stand.

In *When We Were Miners* (Ken Smith Press, £7.99) his history of the strike in South Wales, Ian Isaac says: 'The only section of the trade union and Labour movement who instinctively understood the miners' dilemma were the rail workers. We received exceptional support from the NUR and ASLEF.'

We were grateful for your support then; and we are still grateful to you now. Thank you, ASLEF, for everything you did for those of us in the NUM.

ASLEF is supporting four events to mark the 30th anniversary of the great coalfield strike of 1984-85:

- **Exhibition of photos plus films and talks at the Tyneside Irish Centre, Gallowgate, Newcastle, 27 February to 2 March.**
- **Speakers, banners and Hatfield colliery band from 11am at the Broadway Hotel, Dunscroft, Doncaster, on 9 March.**
- **Return to Orgreave for mass picnic and commemoration on 14 June.**
- **Kellingley NUM and Yorkshire Miners' rally on 22 June .**

David Douglass is author of *Pit Life in County Durham* (History Workshop), *A Year of Our Lives* (Hooligan Press) and *Ghost Dancers: The Miners' Last Generation* (Christie Books, £12.95)

To test or not to test

Next month is prostate cancer awareness month. JIM PETERS kicks up a fuss about the politics of the prostate

'PROSTATE cancer is the most common form of cancer in men in the UK. Despite this, most of us have only a rough idea where our prostate is, what it does and what happens when something goes wrong.

I was no different, but I've spent the last 18 months reading up on prostate problems, including cancer, how they affect your quality of life, the treatments available, and their side effects. I'm only just starting to understand the impact prostate cancer has on partners, family and friends.

Cancer is just one of the conditions that can stop your prostate from doing what it should. Others are an enlarged prostate or prostatitis (inflammation of the prostate). All these conditions can be life changing in different ways.

If you have a problem with your prostate you might not have any symptoms but, if you do, they can include trouble starting to pee, a slow flow when you do get started, urgency, frequency, peeing more during the night, erection problems and, very rarely, bloody semen. You might feel pain when sitting, or you might have pain or discomfort all the time.

ONE IN EIGHT ARE AFFECTED

I had never heard of a prostate cancer test and didn't know I'd had one until two months after the event when a form for a second test arrived in the post. I was chucked right in the deep end. The initial test measures the level of prostate specific antigen in your blood. This can give an indication of whether or not there's a problem, but it's not foolproof. It can show high levels of PSA in your blood without you having prostate cancer and the flip side is that some men with prostate cancer have a normal PSA level. When I got the result of my PSA test and the GP started telling me not to panic it had the opposite effect.

Some countries have routine PSA screening programmes, mainly for men over 50. We don't in the UK, partly because of the unreliability of the test but mainly, I suspect, because of the cost. We have screening programmes for other cancers but for prostate we have a Risk Management Programme.

Despite not having a national screening programme, all men, of any age, can ask their GPs for the test. The advantage of men taking control over their own health is that we can all build up a personal record of our PSA levels, useful for all men, but particularly for those at high risk (Afro-Caribbean men and those with a close relative who has prostate cancer). Before you test though, read up on it. Find out what factors can affect the result and how a diagnosis and subsequent treatments can affect your quality of life. Don't go into it blindly. Getting a PSA test is a personal decision each individual has to make.

PUSSYCAT OR TIGER

One in 8 men in the UK will get prostate cancer; 40,000 are diagnosed every year. Not all will need immediate treatment and some will live to a ripe old age, never having been treated, and die of something unrelated. It depends on what grade of prostate cancer you have – pussycat or tiger.

A PSA is just one test your GP can do. The other might be a Digital Rectal Examination – 'finger up the bum' to you and me – not something to relish but it could help save your life! Many men don't see their doctors until something happens and then find the cancer has spread. You can still be treated, no matter how late the diagnosis, but you might not be cured.

As there are 250,000 men living with the disease in the UK there's a good chance some of them will be reading this. As many will know, the testing, diagnosis and treatment for prostate cancer is not straightforward but the fact they're living with it is a good reason to consider being tested – you can live to tell the tale. Most of the men who aren't living with it are the ones who didn't see a doctor until it was too late.

I've spoken to men affected who think the field is neglected. I've heard it compared to breast cancer, the most common cancer amongst women. The life changing effects of breast cancer – such as a mastectomy – are appreciated by women and men alike because it's talked about; it's on the political agenda. One reason why the field of breast cancer is different is that women have spoken up. They have not tolerated no screening, inadequate funding and being denied the things they need that can improve their lives after a breast cancer diagnosis.

POLITICS OF PROSTATE

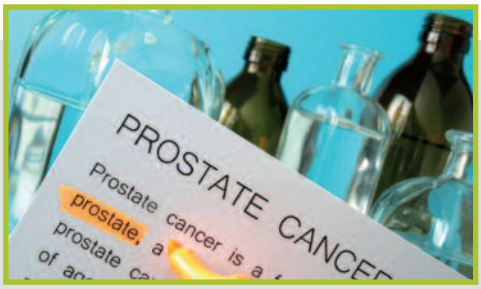
Men, on the other hand, say very little. It is little wonder that no prostate cancer screening programme exists, that funding is inadequate and that the biopsy initially offered by the NHS (if needed) is not the most reliable available because the more reliable one costs more.

The loss of a prostate, with potential side effects which include incontinence and impotence, are not spoken about openly. Men who are left incontinent or impotent after treatment find that many of the things that can help relieve these devastating side effects are not routinely available on the NHS or, if they are, depend on where you live. Why? Perhaps the politicians who control the purse strings are relying on men not kicking up about what can be a very embarrassing subject. We should be kicking up. There are 250,000 of us with this disease and we have a lot to kick up about. Until we do, the most common cancer that affects us, and will affect another 40,000 next year, will remain inadequately funded and an easy target for NHS cuts.

A good place to find out more is the **Prostate Cancer UK** website at www.prostatecanceruk.org

Also **Cancer Research UK** at www.cancerresearchuk.org; the Prostate Cancer Risk Management Programme which you can find at www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk/prostate and Macmillan which you can find at www.macmillan.org.uk

The Macmillan site's Learn Zone has an hour-long BBC radio programme, ***Prostate Cancer Journey***, which takes away a lot of the mystery



From box boy to duty manager

Arnos Grove held its branch Christmas social on 17 December; an opportunity for our existing drivers, and a good number of retired members, to sit down over a glass and share stories. Special mention should go to Gordon Smith who retired after 42 years' membership. He is seen here with his retirement certificate presented by District 8 Organiser Finn Brennan.

When Gordon came on the Underground he followed in the footsteps of his father John who had joined the company in 1962, was one of the founding members of Rickmansworth branch, and their very first branch secretary. Obviously, one of his father's first acts, when Gordon joined London Underground in 1971 as a box boy, was to sign him up to ASLEF.

Gordon became a guard at Rickmansworth and then a driver at Edgware on the Northern line. Following spells at Hammersmith & City, and back to Rickmansworth via Neasden on the Metropolitan line, he came to the Piccadilly line in 1987 where he remained until retirement. While here he became an instructor operator before moving into his final grade as a duty manager, trains, a job in which he never forgot his ASLEF affiliation.

Finn also presented a 30 year badge to Graham Dean; Graham has always been active in ASLEF and has held a number of positions in the branch. He is currently chair of the Trains Functional Council.

Dave Atherton, branch secretary

Upcoming events

EASTLEIGH – SATURDAY 8 MARCH
All drivers, firemen, guards, shunters, fitters, clerical and station staff are welcome at the Eastleigh reunion from 12.00 to 18.00 at the old British Rail Social Club in Eastleigh. Free buffet. Details from Peter (Plastic Gorilla) Morris on 01962 866186.

CRICKLEWOOD – FRIDAY 21 MARCH
The next Cricklewood reunion is at the RAFA Club, Ashburnham Road, Bedford, from 12.00.

RAMSGATE – THURSDAY 3 APRIL
Southeastern retired members' reunion from 11.00 at the Red Arrow Club, Newington Road, Ramsgate, CT11 0QX.

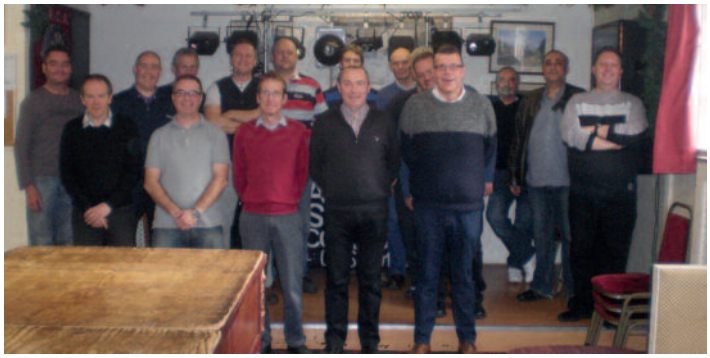
Please send all your branch news and photos to journal@aslef.org.uk

Dick Hardy, ex-Stewarts Lane depot master, with the wives of retired members, at a celebration at Selhurst Railway Club to mark Dick's 90th birthday. Colin Creswell's wife made a cake in the shape of the Golden Arrow smoke box door; this was the premier loco hauled by Stewarts Lane men.
Peter Smith, RMS

Terrific turn out

As well as an exceptional turn out – three-quarters of our current members – we were joined for our latest meeting – and agm – by Dave Calfe, EC member District 6; District Organiser Dicky Fisher; Bob Earlam and Neal Cooper, London Midland company council; plus Vic Waite, Roy Woodward and Phil Spice from the Retired Members' Section.

Dave spoke about disputes on CrossCountry, a rest day working issue on Trans Pennine Express,



and the London Underground Boxing Day service. He also spoke about ASLEF's position on the default retirement age and zero hours contracts, and changes in the law relating to employment tribunals. Dave then thanked the branch for our support in his re-election to his position.

Bob and Neal gave a very interesting report on London Midland issues, including the successful conclusion of the recent pay award, implementation of the new DAS in cab system, issues with LM's driver training package, including LM's number of drivers and each depot's numbers.

The RMS then gave their usual interesting report on what they had been up to over the past year.

We also said farewell and happy retirement to driver Jay Kalyan and driver instructor Mick Kerry. And we must include our friendly resident fitter, Stan Curtis, who also retired this year. Our very best wishes to all of them!

The chairman and secretary want to thank all the people who have taken the time and trouble to visit us over the past 12 months. We are only a very small branch, so the fact that ASLEF and company council officers give up Sunday mornings to come and visit us is very much appreciated.

Nick Walker, branch reporter

Today and tomorrow

Howard Kaye, EC member District 5, and District Organiser Nigel Gibson reported to a well-attended Tilbury branch meeting in December.

My report as committee member for the Retired Members' Section covered membership, which stands at 2,164, has a committee of eight and now, for the first time, includes a woman. We had a successful weekend forum at Scalby and our agm at Didcot. Speakers at these events included the general secretary; Dave Tyson, our representative on the trustee board of the RPMI; Ian Lavery, Labour MP for Wansbeck; and John Cryer, Labour MP for Leyton and Wanstead.

The RMS works closely with the National Pensioners' Convention to campaign against many of the problems facing today's pensioners with a view to creating a better legacy for those in the future. On behalf of the RMS committee, I thanked Tilbury branch for their generous donation and the interest shown by members in the 500 club.

It was an interesting and informative meeting, outlining the continuing challenges that face both the depot and the FOC.

Bill Dale, RMS

Longsight welcomed District 3 Organiser Colin Smith who gave us a thorough report before presenting long service badges to excellent reps Brothers Mark O'Grady and Alan Moss for 35 and 25 years' service respectively. When the meeting finished the celebration and branch room discussion on the issue of rostering work carried over into the bar.

Jim Hopkins, branch secretary

Ovation for an Arctic Star

We had another memorable drivers' reunion in November. They came from near and far and what a night it was! Pre-dinner saw the reading of the names of those no longer with us and a reminder of our brave armed forces men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in so many conflicts so we could sleep safely in our beds at night. There followed a spine-tingling rendition of the last post by the senior bugler of the local Boys' Brigade.

After dinner speeches began with a passionate and memorable performance from former general secretary Lew Adams and a tribute to Sid Peace, at 91, the most senior driver present.

Highlight of the night was the presentation of the *Arctic Star* to Ron 'Brassy' Bloom. An emotional audience heard of the bravery of Ron and his colleagues as they battled dreadful conditions to get supplies through to Archangel and Murmansk in Russia during the Second World War. More than 3,000 men lost their lives as Hitler threw everything at the convoys. Ships were not allowed to stop or turn back to help comrades in distress as it was too dangerous; the ice was so severe an inadvertent touching of a hand rail without gloves resulted in most of your skin left behind. The ovation for Ron as he received his medal was fantastic.

Ron Bloom with dinner organiser Kelvy Higgins

Kelvy Higgins, Ipswich branch

Remembering Dennis and Raymond

On 5 December drivers from Leicester branch met up with the Toton Walking Club at Stanton Gate in Derbyshire to visit the scene of a fatal accident 50 years ago, on 6 December 1963, which resulted in the deaths of two members of Leicester train crew, driver Dennis Vincent, 37, and fireman Raymond Carter, 36. Two wreaths were placed near the scene of the accident, one from Leicester branch and one from the walking club. Our sincere thanks to Pete Mee, retired ex-Toton driver, who organised the event, and also to the Toton Walking Club for their magnificent turn out to help us commemorate the event.

Ian Farnfield, branch chairman

THE Locomotive Journal.
A MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND FIREMEN.

Mick Holder looks back through the *Journal* to February 1914

SIGNALMEN MAKING MISTAKES

Reflecting recent debates about safety after rail crashes around the world, *The Locomotive Journal* discussed potential improvements following the jailing of Driver Caudle after Aisgill: 'We should say something as to how such an accident might have been prevented. Collisions, and even derailments, may be caused by errors in signalling on the part of the signalmen, or by the misreading, or unobservance, of signals on the part of drivers.

'Block signalling and interlocking, together with track circuiting, have done much to prevent signalmen making mistakes, but this method and these devices have not done, and cannot do, anything to protect enginemen against the misunderstanding of signals or inadvertently passing signals at danger.

HUMAN FACTOR ON FOOTPLATE

'Given the best possible system of semaphore lock and block signalling, if the human factor on the footplate fails, then everything fails. Many contrivances have been introduced to remind signalmen of their duties, whereas, generally speaking, very little has been done with a view to the avoidance of errors on the part of engine drivers. The number of signals has largely increased and is still increasing. There is, consequently, greater difficulty in drivers promptly picking out the right signals, while augmented by the less efficient look out afforded by large and high-pitched locomotive boilers which are now employed, and which will be more extensively used as time goes on.'

TRIP COCKS AND TRAIN STOPS

The report rejects the use of 'trip cocks' or 'train stops' as used on London's Underground, but suggests: 'Cab signalling might be given an extended trial. This form of signalling, varying much in detail, but very little in principle, has been the subject of hundreds of patents. In some systems only an audible signal is given inside the engine cab, while in others both an audible and visible indication of the positions of outdoor signals is provided. As yet, cab signalling is in use on only two or three railways in this country and, so far as we know, it has given satisfaction. Another method, which is still quite in its infancy, is the wireless control of trains.'

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BILL DOBSON LOCO MAN

My dad Bill was a loco man; that is how he would describe himself, that is how he judged his self-worth; and it is a fact of which he was proud, to his core, until his dying day.

Born in 1928, in the slums of Oldham, he witnessed as a small boy the deprivations wreaked upon ordinary working people by the Great Depression; the memory of barefoot children starving on the streets of what was, and still is, one of the wealthiest countries of the world, left him simmering with rage.

It was no surprise he became politically active and, with millions of others of his generation, clung to a socialist Utopian ideal of a fair and equal society and, as a powerful and articulate speaker, proved to be a formidable advocate for the cause.

He joined the much-reviled Militant tendency and remained active in his local Labour constituency after the party had purged the 'loony left', preferring to stay on as 'a bit of grit under the eyelid' of the Labour Party leadership.

As passionate as he was about politics, the prime force in his life was ASLEF. You see his grandfather, another William Dobson, was a founder member of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers & Firemen, branch secretary at Newton Heath in 1884, and dad knew the old man well.

I have a strong suspicion that William may still have been working when 14-year-old Bill began as a cleaner at Low Moor shed; which would mean there has been a Dobby active in the ranks as long as there has been an ASLEF.

ASLEF, to dad, was something he was; not just something he was in. He had an unshakeable conviction that ASLEF was the rock to which you cling in rough seas and a place to find protection and safe harbour no matter how much trouble you are in.

Although he was active for the better part of 67 years, regularly attending branch meetings until he was 80, he was never a 'big hitter' like Ray Buckton or Bill Ronksley or even Big Jack Housley; but he knew them all and they knew him.

With his passing a link to the origins of the Society has gone. But if you were fortunate enough to have met my dad you can be proud you knew a man who knew a man who struck a spark that lit this flame we call ASLEF.

Dave Dobson, East Coast LLC and Leeds branch chair

JOHN PARTINGTON SALTLEY SEAGULL

The loss of a dear friend or loved one is always devastating. When this occurs out of the blue, and on Christmas Day, it is, I now know, a blow beyond belief. I arrived at Saltley in 1976 as a long haired spotty 17 year old second man who thought he knew it all. I was marked with John Partington and he soon made it clear that I knew very little but, if I was willing to learn, he would teach me the ropes. Over the next few years, he taught me not only the job but also some damn good lessons about life.

When I look back now I realise that, in the 1970s and '80s, we spent more time with these men than we did with our own families. If you had a good mate – and I had the best – they would mould you into the railwayman we are now. Many of you will have had the privilege to work with someone similar, professional to the core, immensely proud of their job, stood their ground when necessary, spoke their mind as and when required and may well have offended a few in the course of their duties. As top link drivers they were held in high esteem by the majority of managers.

John Partington on the footplate doing the job he loved

John and I kept in touch after he retired 16 years ago and on 18 December several of us had what was to be our last pint with him in Birmingham. The first had been in the Windmill at Gloucester in 1976; there had been many more in between. John was held in the highest regard by those who knew and worked with him although he would say he was just telling us what his father – also a driver – had passed down to him.

As railwaymen and women we have a great camaraderie and respect for one other. I am immensely proud to have worked with John and to have been able to call him a friend. As a fellow railwayman once said: 'Red light bright, one more to tow to the shed.' Our deepest sympathy to his daughter Kimberley and long-term partner Lina.

Bob Dunn, now at Wolverhampton but a Saltley man at heart

WAYNE ROBERT MAYO LOVING FATHER

Wayne, a retired ASLEF member, passed away peacefully in his sleep on 21 November 2013. He was born in Swindon in 1945, worked on the railway for 47 years, and loved every minute of it. He was a loving father and grandfather, and enjoyed fishing, socialising over a pint with friends, and holidays in Spain. Our condolences to his partner Marie, their daughter and family.

Peter Smith, RMS

BERNARD GORDON FACEBOOK FRIEND

Bernard, 85, who spent the last two years in a nursing home after having a stroke, was very well liked. Many drivers expressed on Facebook the pleasure of working with him.

PJ Smith, King's Cross branch

DAVID JOHNS LIVED LIFE TO FULL

It was standing room only at Weeley crematorium where friends and comrades gathered to support Jean and their children. David, 77, lived life to the full, he was a great person to work with, and dearly loved by his family.

PJ Smith, King's Cross branch

STRATFORD LAST JOURNEYS

Another two Stratford men have departed on their last journey.

TED WEEKS, 80, died after a long fight against cancer. In his later railway life, when he was taken off the road, you could always rely on Ted to make sure your books were up to date before going on an assessment.

JOHN PORTER, 60, although a quiet man, was always a part of the Stratford community. John was well liked, always attended the Stratford reunion, and enjoyed the company of his old workmates. Farewell to both; gone but never forgotten by all true Stratford men.

Dave Pizzie, Stratford branch

These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the ASLEF Journal at 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN or by email to journal@aslef.org.uk Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our STAR LETTER feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

Not just high speed trains

I had to write after reading the interview with Mick Whelan in *The Independent* (6 January). I thoroughly applaud the stance taken. It is pragmatic and, given the fact that in politics not many people agree with the opposition, heroic! Too many people have an opinion on too many issues shaped by too little information.

Mick knows what he's talking about on the need for HS2 because, after you look at all the evidence, the need for it is indisputable, were money no object. Once you limit the budget, you need to make a better case, but this has been done and even the Prime Minister, who would normally be assumed to be sceptical on a rail project, can see it.

By agreeing with David Cameron, Mick has shown that we are not always just supporting rail projects or Labour's policies but we have considered the facts and made an observation that crosses party politics and dogma, and supports the right answer.

In a nutshell, HS2 is not just about whizzy bang new trains that go fast. It's about the West Coast main line and the East Coast main line being virtually full for passengers, and with no room to expand for freight. It's cheaper to build high speed lines rather than traditional ones because you use the plentiful power of the trains to follow the contours of the land rather than building all those expensive cuttings and bridges to keep the railway flat so gutless trains can move.

I know, because I drive them. Anyone who thinks you can expand and remodel existing railways easily doesn't use them or understand the vast extra expense incurred when you try to modify them.

Politics should not be decided by who you like, or who you align yourself with in the main, but about who is right on each issue. And on this issue, at the moment, David Cameron is right; that doesn't mean I agree with much else he's doing.

Nevil Arthur, Ashford, Kent

My right to vote Yes

I am writing to register my utter disgust at the completely biased article (*White Paper Fantasy* by Neil Findlay, MSP for Lothian) printed in the *Journal* in January. I am a Scottish socialist trade union member and am proud to admit that I am voting for independence come the referendum and would like to know why something so important to a country is given such one-sided treatment which is blatantly trying to influence the vote in favour of the No campaign.

The purpose of a trade union is to protect the rights and views of all members equally. What you did in that article was to give a platform to a party that has abandoned its socialist ideals toward the rail industry with regard to renationalising the railway, its failure to repeal anti-trade union laws and to support MPs of a political party that couldn't be bothered to have all its members turn up to vote against the bedroom tax.

ASLEF's decision to back the No campaign was disgusting. It was voted on by the AAD where about 90% of the people in attendance will not even receive a vote in the upcoming referendum, a motion pushed forward in my opinion by people looking to further their own agenda within the Labour movement.

That article does nothing but bad mouth the leaders of an opposite political party (for which I incidentally did not vote) but reinforced my opinion that the No campaign has nothing positive to say. Why were the Scottish members of this union not canvassed on the issue? Does our opinion not count?

It was cheap trash journalism of the kind we have come to expect from papers like *The Sun*, *Evening Standard*, *Daily Mail*, etc.

THE PITS, THE CAR CONVOYS, SCARGILL AND THE GREAT COW

The anniversary of the miners' strike, and the new revelations now released under the 30 year rule, brings back mixed emotions. The one I like to remember is the strength and resolve of those wonderful men and women I met, not only on the picket lines, but at the Welsh pit I visited with the Fratton depot clothing and canned food car convoys (many other depots will remember their own convoys). The men were strong but, my word, the women were phenomenal!

Thatcher was determined, after the 1974 strike, that she would defeat any other attempt by the miners and set about doing so by getting massive stocks to the surface by a system of bonuses. Whatever one thinks of Arthur Scargill, he was right when he criticised what was happening, for he could see where those tactics would inevitably lead. He was also right when he warned that North Sea oil and gas would eventually run out, that we had 300 years of coal stocks, and to close pits would leave us hostage to foreign imports.

This is where I will lose a lot of friends but it would be wrong to ignore his mistakes. I believe he should have trusted his men and held a ballot. I firmly believe he would have won that ballot by a substantial majority and the strike would then have been supported 100%. Miners, like railway workers, don't ignore a democratic majority decision.

Nevertheless, a great injustice was done to this country because it wasn't the miners who politicised the dispute, it was the Great Cow who wanted to defeat trade unionism even at the price of destroying the manufacturing base of this country and putting Britain in hock to foreign energy firms.

Thank you to all of those men, women and their families who stood firm for more than a year and showed us what trade unionism is all about. I'll never forget them.

Len Worboys, RMS

Then to allow him to push the *Red Collective* paper at £11 was essentially allowing him to endorse one sided views on people while making some cash for his campaign.

This union made a decision in supporting this campaign that disgusts me and behaved more like the governments round the world that it freely condemns for not allowing an opposition party's right to express its views freely and you simply endorsed it with that article.

I will freely fight against this decision in the workplace and against this policy openly. I do this because I am a free thinking trade union member and will not be dictated to by a hierarchy that couldn't be bothered to ask its members' opinions on something that could change their lives entirely for the better.

I accept a person's right to vote No just as I expect them to accept my right to vote Yes.
Liam Tansey, Edinburgh Waverley

Mick Whelan, general secretary, says: 'Delegates at AAD in Edinburgh last May unanimously agreed to campaign for a No vote and to affiliate to the Better Together campaign after hearing from Kevin Lindsay, the union's organiser in Scotland, that not one ASLEF branch in Scotland was in favour of taking the country out of the United Kingdom.'

Overtime on Underground

I would like to respond to the letters in recent *Journals* regarding overtime. Neither of the contributors mentions how they started in the grade; was it promotional? Nor does Bro Hardesty state why he feels the passionate need to do overtime if it's not financial as he claims or is it just solely because 'others can'?

As for Boxing Day, New Year's Eve and the Olympics, the argument was for people who didn't want to work or travel at extremely unsocial hours. Ensuring at triple (pensionable) pay enough volunteers to cover, providing a service, and delivering adequate compensation, people were able to swap duties and get to and from work proves the point, not theirs.

None of the contributors mentioned losing jobs, unlike in lots of other industries, or unions, instead of agreeing redundancies. ASLEF and LUL have continued, unlike some in the industry, to provide more jobs .

Fact: hundreds of train operators (including all pool operators) would not have a train driver's job or the terms and conditions they enjoy if their predecessors had worked overtime! Tell some of your colleagues in the canteen they are on the dole and anyone seeking promotion from other stations or other grades cannot do so because you want to work their jobs!

Fact: it is economically cheaper for an employer to pay overtime (even on a bank holiday) than recruit, train, fit out in uniform, pay sick pay, national insurance, pension and holidays than to employ someone new.

Fact: overtime is only given when needed by the company, and can be used as a reward tool for compliant individuals. Workers then become reliant on overtime which can then be taken away at any time. Just like the CSS bonus that magically appears and disappears. Or, in the case of Bro Pearce, forced to work when the company has no employees to cover duties because they use casual overtime to fill vacancies and the pretence of training.

Fact: the vast majority of the other grades all work longer hours for less salary.

If they wish to change the situation, may I suggest instead of writing letters they attend their branch meetings, find suitable support they claim they are aware of and, through the AAD, get the policy changed. I agree with them on one point, with a growing work force that has a more transient background rather than a lifetime within the industry. Along with family and societal changes of divorce, separation and people living and working longer, we need a debate on how to meet these challenges. But working overtime at the detriment of others and the factual fatigue leading to incidents and accidents and subsequent job loss is not the answer.

For my part I was happy negotiating for over 35 years getting people into jobs that pay £48,000 pa, with 100% pensionable pay for a 35 hour week and up to 43 days' leave so they can buy 'the basics.'

Over those years I have met hundreds of people from TfL, LUL, Police, the armed forces, Fire Brigade, Post Office, NHS and local government who wished they could do Bro Hardesty's job! Some even offered to do it at £10,000 pa less!

I hope this is not too personal, vociferous or rhetorical and answers his question.
Steve Grant, ex District 8 Organiser

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THREE BRIDGES branch commemorative centenary badges, limited numbers available, in red and gold or black and gold for £5, cheques payable to ASLEF Three Bridges Branch 213. Further info from Paul Eden (07952 482443) paul@homerdaz.com or Dave Mansfield (07816 960331) david.mansfield14@btinternet.com

THREE BRIDGES depot commemorative 150 year badges 1848-1998, limited to 100, available for £5. Cheques payable to ASLEF Three Bridges branch 213. Further information from Paul Eden (07952 482443) paul@homerdaz.com or Dave Mansfield (07816 960331) david.mansfield14@btinternet.com

COMMEMORATIVE badge to mark the 25th anniversary of the Clapham rail disaster. Each badge is individually numbered. £5 including p+p, cheques payable to ASLEF Bournemouth branch, from J Martin, Flat 1 Blenheim Court, 26 Marlborough Road, Bournemouth, BH4 8DH.

ENGRAVING: ASLEF driver based in Sunderland branch offers professional engraving at reasonable prices. I can engrave anything you wish, such as the ASLEF logo on a pint tankard which is pictured. For further details contact Paul Potts by email at ppotts1969@hotmail.co.uk

DENNIS BOSTOCK'S UNDERGROUND MEMOIRS 1968-2008 at £15 on a CD data disc containing 450 A4 pages, including photos, with free Ongar line and engineers DVD. Text details to 07599 018271. Pay by cheque or postal order only on receipt of discs. In ASLEF, and you, I trust.

FAVERSHAM branch is selling mugs and tee-shirts 'devoted' to Mrs Thatcher! Both are £10 and illustrate the branch view of her vicious right-wing policies. They can be obtained from the branch website www.aslef-favershambranch.co.uk or from Andy Cooke at andycooke69@hotmail.com or (mobile) 07771 923831.

Cause he gets up in the morning

More than one million people commute by train to the heart of London every day. KEITH RICHMOND dips into a new compendium about life and love on the 9 to 5

Chris Moss (top) has compiled a fascinating compendium of facts and features for commuters and drivers in Metroland

EVERY day of the working week, 860,000 people let the train take the strain on their journey into London; another 400,000 or so travel into work on the Tube. *Smoothly from Harrow* by travel journalist Chris Moss is a tribute to commuters to the capital, or what he calls 'the invisible hero of the 8.03 from Dorking, or Shenfield, or Wokingham, or anywhere outside Zone 1.'

Moss, 47, was born and brought up in Burtonwood, Lancashire, read theology at King's College, London, rendering him 'essentially unemployable,' and was a teacher for six years before becoming a journalist. He worked on the *Buenos Aires Herald*, an English-language newspaper in Argentina, and *Time Out* in London, as well as writing travel features for *The Guardian*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Financial Times*.

He has commuted into central London from stations such as Camberwell, Camden, Hackney, Manor House, Tooting, Herne Hill and Surbiton – as well as Harrow on the Hill, of course – so knows of what he writes.

> **'Cause he gets up in the morning, / And he goes to work at nine, / And he comes back home at five-thirty, / Gets the same train every time'** – Ray Davies

Smoothly from Harrow is about the emotional landscape of Metroland, a name originally coined for those parts of Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Middlesex served in the early years of the 20th century by an extension to the Metropolitan Railway, the world's oldest underground line, and the ribbon development which followed in its wake to the west of London out into the Chilterns. It later became the name of an award-winning novel by Julian Barnes, which was subsequently turned into a film with Christian Bale and Emily Watson, and was the subject of many of John Betjeman's finest moments.

The title is taken from a line in *Baker Street Station Buffet* by Betjeman: 'Smoothly from Harrow, passing Preston Road, / They saw the last green fields and misty sky, / At Neasden watched a workmen's train unload, / And, with the morning villas sliding by, / They felt so sure on their electric trip / That Youth and Progress were in partnership'.

> **'I know a land where the wild flowers grow / Near, near at hand if by train you go, / Metro-land, Metro-land'** – George Robert Sims

It's a collection of poems – by John Keats, Thomas Hardy, Philip Larkin and Louis MacNeice as well as Betjeman, the 'bard of the 'burbs' – posters – 'Live in Kent and be content'; 'Live in Surrey free from worry' – songs – hits like *A Well Respected Man* by The Kinks as well as traditional folk songs such as *This Train* – prose – extracts from Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, John Galsworthy, Katherine Mansfield, JG Ballard and Samuel Pepys – as well as pictures, stories, confessions, observations, facts and stats.

Andrew Cook, who works out of Selhurst depot for Southern, writes from a driver's perspective: 'I drive in and out of London Bridge and Victoria taking commuters to work in the morning and the sometimes well-oiled folks on their return journey home. I often start very early – silly o'clock I call it – getting up at 2am to be at work for 3.46am for some of the earliest starts. I'm happy so long as my cab heating works.

'I see girls with "just washed" hair doing their make-up, looking glum at the prospect of another day in the city. Many are reading *Metro*. All are standing in little groups along the platform next to where the doors will be when the train stops. I have to be careful to make sure I stop in the right place. If I don't, everyone has to shuffle around, elbows at the ready with that steely determination to get "their seat" on the carriage that gives them the best shot of getting off the train nearest to the station exit.'

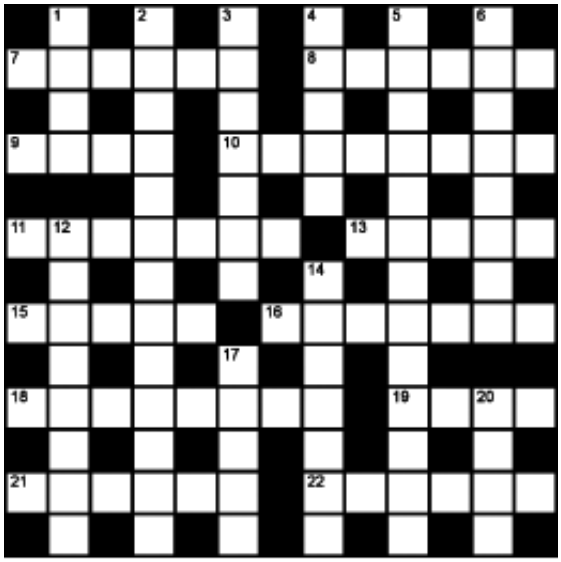
> **'This train is bound for glory, this train'** – Trad (anon)

As well as the one and two page pieces, there are lots of bite size paragraphs throughout this book: 'When he was still David Cornwell, and working for MI5, he wrote his first novel, *Call for the Dead*, on the train from Great Missenden to Marylebone; his wife typed up his script every night. He came up with the name John le Carré while riding a bus over Battersea bridge.'

And this delightful morsel which should bring a wry smile to everyone who loves the railway: 'Dr Richard Beeching commuted from East Grinstead to London in the 1960s, when he was chairman of the British Railways Board. The street that honours his memory, Beeching Way, part of the A22, was built on one of the two local railway lines he closed; some locals wanted to call it Beeching Cut.'

***Smoothly from Harrow: A Compendium for the London Commuter* by Chris Moss is published by Blue Guides at £12**

Prize Crossword number 94 by Zebedee



Across

7 Tie up (an animal) (6)
8 Bottle cap remover (6)
9 Metallic element (4)
10 One going to live abroad (8)
11 Refuge (7)
13 Vertical; very fine (5)
15 Playing card jack (5)
16 Return to bad ways (7)
18 Groups (8)
19 Coarse file (4)
21 Niche (6)
22 Itinerant mender (6).

Down

1 Son of Jacob from a little village (4)
2 Long-running children's TV series (13)
3 Soft-soled shoe; plant like ivy (7)
4 Funny man (5)
5 Police raid document (6,7)
6 Thinness of edge or fineness of point (8)
12 Capital of Hawaii (8)
14 Compactness (7)
17 Discourage (5)
20 A canal; 1956 debacle (4)

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

MARKS & SPENCER

Solution to prize crossword number 93 which appeared in the January 2014 edition of the ASLEF *Journal*

Across 1 Judo 4 Aesop 7 Linear 8 Sand 9 Route 10 Mumble 11 Nasa 12 Scald 13 Insert 16 Deed 18 Send 19 Catnap 21 Patch 22 Ursa 24 Elixir 25 Shape 26 Numb 27 Subdue 28 Title 29 Duty **Down** 1 Jason 2 Old maid 3 Debbie 4 Arrest 5 Sausage 6 Pleaded 14 Spa 15 Ran 16 Deposit 17 Extract 18 Spurned 19 Cheese 20 Trilby 23 Abbey

Congratulations to **Mark Baker** of **Chorley**, **Lancashire**, who was last month's winner.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....Postcode.....

Thanks for all your responses to the 93rd ASLEF crossword in the January edition. If you successfully complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF *Journal*, 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN by 14 February

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